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ABSTRACT

Schools have become learning centers for a very diverse (ethnically and racially) student and faculty body. Unfortunately, much of a principal's education does not include cultural awareness as an important facet of building and maintaining leadership. This paper explores the way a newly appointed Latina principal works with her school faculty members and the various ethno-racial groups of the school community to strengthen their inner-city school. It focuses on how differing cultural values shape community expectations of their school, its leader, and how these values influence their individual and group interactions. Examples of cultural values that clash include the principal's need of a hierarchy of authority and power; the teachers' being more collegial and relaxed in their comportment; white parents' valuing efficiency, assertiveness, and individuality in education and in the school leader; and the African-American community's need to have a personal connection with the principal for building social and moral capital. Principals need to be taught about cultural values and how they influence people's expectations, if they are going lead multiethnic, multiracial schools effectively without marginalizing or alienating important parts of the similarly diverse school community. (Contains 48 references.) (RT)

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Culture in Educational Administration: Competing Values and Expectations

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Witnessing the arrival of students, teachers, parents, and administrators at any urban school today, the observer of a century ago would be struck *not* by the variety of languages spoken (for the end of the 19th century saw as great a linguistic multiplicity) but by the diversity of races and ethnicities present. If this observer were to have a look inside the school's administrative offices, he would be equally surprised by the number of women he would find in positions of leadership, and no doubt astonished that increasing numbers of these leaders are women of color (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1994). This ethno-racial diversity, as well as the increasing diversity of roles and gender, has made of urban schools complex communities that defy simple explanations and single-dimension administrative concepts.

Unlike the schools of even thirty years ago, in an inner-city school today one might well find a female, African-American principal, a teaching staff composed of equal numbers of whites and blacks -- all of this situated in a neighborhood that is predominately Latino. Each of these groups would bring its own expectations of the school and its principal, each group defining effective leadership in terms of its own experiences and cultural norms. Clearly, the traditional conceptualization of leader no longer corresponds to the expectations of a majority of the members of such communities, and yet the questions remain: How are these schools being led? How do principals who are not white, male Anglos lead in such diverse schools and communities?

By embedding the school, its governance structures and even academic mission, more democratically and more deeply in its community, one assumption of many educational reform measures appears to be that it will be more representative and

responsive to those it serves. Authority in such systems no longer derives from the formal position of leader, but rather, collectively, "[t]he sources of authority they appeal to are the values that are central to the school, and the commitments that everyone has made to them" (Sergiovanni, 1996:91-92). But what does this mean when different groups hold different values, and thus conceive of their commitments differently? How is the leader to proceed when the values of constituent groups are in competition with one another? Where do the principal's own values figure in leading these communities?

This paper explores the ways Elena Hernandez, a newly appointed Latina principal, together with the faculty members of her school and the various ethno-racial groups of the school community, work together in the early months of the principal's tenure to strengthen their inner-city school. In particular, this study focuses on the ways differing cultural values shape what members of this diverse community expect of their school and its leader, and how these same values influence their individual and group interactions.

The Setting

The Mary Blane School is a small, K-5 elementary school located in the blighted heart of New Metropolis, a major city in the Northeast. Even though the faculty has remained stable over the last fifteen years, student enrollments have been declining steadily since the busing crisis of the 1970s. With education budgets growing ever leaner, Mary Blane has not been able to compete with larger neighboring schools in the scramble for resources. With the adoption of the Choice Plan in New Metropolis, it was expected that some schools would flourish while others would fail. And in fact, many Blane

families have chosen to enroll their children in more prestigious schools. Today, the Blane School has become known as a "dumping ground" for children who could not make it in other schools. Enrollment has dropped to 138, a full 50 percent under capacity.

Built in 1937 to educate the children of its then largely Irish-American, working-class neighborhood, Blane remained predominantly white well into the 1960s. Not until 1966 did Blane hire its first African-American teacher. New Metropolis's desegregation plan in the 1970s integrated the school's student body, but the teaching and administrative staff remained largely white -- even as the surrounding neighborhoods became predominantly black. At the time of Elena Hernández's appointment, the staff consisted of equal numbers of black and white teachers, six and six. The ethnic makeup of the school's neighborhood, however, was more diverse: 58 percent black (including Haitian, Dominicans, Jamaicans, Puerto Ricans and African Americans), 27 percent white, 11 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent Asian. Additionally, a full 45 percent of all new residents in the neighborhood are members of newcomer immigrant groups.

The Faculty

The faculty at Mary Blane are a strong, independent group. A majority has been at the school for more than ten years, some for more than twenty. They are proud of their camaraderie, of the way they support one another in difficult times, and that they have "seen the school through thick and thin," even as principals have come and gone. Blane, they feel, has suffered from weak leadership over the years: all too often principals have given up in the face of adversity or expediently accepted professional opportunities elsewhere. Principals have been unwilling to fight for teachers and students, and for the

resources that would attract sufficient numbers to keep the school doors open.

The Principal

Born and educated in Puerto Rico, Elena Hernández came to the United States in 1975 as a counselor in the New Metropolis schools. After years of teaching at different levels and in different disciplines at home, she found New Metropolis a dramatic change from what she had known:

> [The American emphasis on race] is something that shocked me when I came into this system; at the time I came, there were classifications as White Puerto Rican and Black Puerto Rican, and that really shocked me. We don't think black and white in my culture.

She had never wanted to be an administrator. Once in the classrooms of America, however, she began to see things differently. When she began to speak out against what she perceived to be unfair treatment by administrators, she soon gained the attention and support of her fellow teachers. When the position of assistant principal opened up in the school where she worked, her fellow teachers urged her to apply. She received that appointment, and eventually, the Mary Blane appointment followed.

In reflecting on the connections between her own background and her present-day educational values, Hernández harkens back to the sense of community she found in the rural school she attended as a youngster in Puerto Rico:

> There weren't enough books or paper and pencils in that school. But the teachers made us see that education could give us something better. They were very demanding. The class was always a place of escape from whatever problems you might have [outside of school] because the focus was on learning. The school was the center of our [lives]. That's what schools are meant to be. Students don't need "mothering."

Entry

Hernández calculated that to keep Blane open, she would need wide support from the parents and community. But to gain that support, she needed "to reach out" to the community and its concerns. With a bit of research she was able to connect with a host of local organizations dedicated to crime prevention, community health, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Hernández began to attend their meetings and community functions, making sure they knew that the Blane School was interested in their work. She made a point of getting to know their leaders and inviting them to visit the school.

At the same time, Hernández began to reach out to professional parents. While the Blane School was situated in a predominately African-American area, it bordered Mission Park, a neighborhood of "gentrified" homes, where young white families had moved during the 1980s. Working with members of the Parents Council, Hernández set out to attract these professional families to her school. Blane could not offer the programs of the larger schools, but it could offer these young families the advantage of smaller classes, intimate contact with teachers, and direct influence with the principal. In turn, these families might bring resources on which the school could draw: their professional business connections, knowledge of fundraising, and expectations of working with their children's school.

As a statement of care and commitment to the school, Hernández set about clearing and cleaning the schoolyard. For many years the secluded area behind the school building had been used as a neighborhood dumping ground. Calling on everyone in the school community to participate, Hernández joined with students, parents, and members of the community to clean up the schoolyard. Disappointingly for Hernández, few

teachers joined in the clean up. As a culmination and celebration of their community day, Hernández planted daffodil bulbs behind the school in the area where trash had been. "Flowers are important in my culture; you might have the poorest house in the village but you can always make it pretty with flowers," Hernández explained.

Hernández's actions, however, were not understood by everyone. One African-American teacher recalls:

> We had a community day...and we had parents and kids and people from the community here. Well, Ms. Hernández begins by telling all the kids about what she used to do as a kid in Puerto Rico -- which is fine! But she takes us all out and plants potatoes! Now I think she meant that to be a gesture of community building, but she needs to understand that cultivating potatoes in the schoolyard just looks odd to this community...They don't understand sometimes what she is about.

By the beginning of the next academic year, enrollments had risen to 156. Word had begun to get out in the community that things were changing at Mary Blane; the new principal had strong notions of how a school should be run, and she would fight for them.

A Stronger School

As enrollments grew, Hernández was pleased that professional families were once again returning to the school. Increasingly, they were attracted by the "family atmosphere," the influence they were able to exert with the principal, and the sense of purpose and stability that the principal was providing. District-wide testing in the spring revealed that academic achievement was once again on the rise.

Over the next months, Hernández launched a school-business partnership with Sunbeam Insurance and MetroBank to support community-building programs, purchase needed technology for the school, and sponsor professional development for the faculty.

She worked to breathe life into the Parents Council, guided by the expertise of newly joined professional parents who had knowledge of the business community. Grants authored by the parents' group financed the buying of new computers, books and materials, and the beginnings of a fund for constructing a well-equipped playground.

Not everyone perceived these developments in the same way, however. Some faculty members felt left out of the reforms taking place; they had, they believed, "a wealth of experience with the school and community," and felt that the principal was not taking advantage of them as a resource. Even though Hernández asked them to commit more time to the creation of new curricular and social activities, some said these were ideas imposed by the principal. Her reforms were "flashy and impressive to outsiders," but the teachers would have preferred that she pay more attention to classroom and community issues. Hernández had sought their input in new programs; she had carefully included them in planning sessions. This notwithstanding, teachers criticized her efforts. "The programs we have here now were planned by Sunbeam and [Hernández] -- the staff didn't hear anything about it until later," recalls one teacher. The teachers had issues that they wanted addressed. Above all, the teachers said, they wanted to be treated like the professionals they were.

More troubling, however, was that some of the teaching staff perceived Hernández to be a "manager," not a "leader." Her style, they said, was autocratic, leaving little room for discussion with the largely female staff. "I think I see it as the army: In the army you're not asked what you feel. You're told to do this, this and this," explained an African-American teacher. Conversely, some teachers found her work with professionals, and particularly the men at Sunbeam, to be not assertive enough. One teacher offered her

understanding of this phenomenon: "Hispanic women are less assertive in these situations [with men]. They are accustomed to a top-down management culture, and that means run by men."

At the same time, some parents of color expressed concern at "the kind of people" now attracted to this "neighborhood school." Hernández, they thought, was focusing on bringing professional, "white" people into the school -- while the needs of the poor, local children were being ignored. Hernández had to understand, many said, that Blane would never be one of the flagship schools of the New Metropolis system; it was meant to serve its neighborhood. An African-American teacher expressed a further concern:

> You've got to live here to understand how the drugs and violence and crime affect these children. It can't be theory to you. These kids aren't going to do what you say just because you're the principal; they've got to trust you and see you every day...and see that you care about them. Same goes for the parents: you've got to know where they're coming from.

By the end of Hernández's second year as principal, prospects for the Mary Blane School had improved dramatically. Enrollments stood at well over 200. Rumors of the school's closing had ceased; in fact, the district's School Committee announced over the summer that Blane would be completely renovated in the coming academic year. The embattled feeling was lifting.

Many in the Blane community, parents and teachers, gratefully acknowledged the energy and drive Hernandez had exhibited in attracting resources to the school. Her entrepreneurial style of leadership had served the community well in turning back the years of drift. They were less certain, however, about her capacity to address the looming social and academic tensions that had arisen in the greater school community. The

principal now needed, many believed, to turn her attention to the faculty and all the parent constituencies, to bring a spirit of collaboration to the students, the staff, and greater community.

Mrs. Hubers Takes Pregnancy Leave

Shortly before the beginning of the December holidays during Hernandez's second year, the principal was notified that Mrs. Hubers, the kindergarten teacher, was requesting pregnancy leave beginning in January. Ordinarily, the decision to replace her would have been a straightforward matter of notifying central office to send round replacement candidates to be interviewed. In this case, however, Hernandez knew that tensions among the various constituencies complicated her decision.

Mrs. Hubers, a Black woman from Aruba, was popular with certain groups in the Blane community. A teacher of the old school, Mrs. Hubers was known for her demanding attention to all areas of a child's education. Students in her classes were expected not merely to perform well in areas of literacy and numeracy, but to exhibit unfailing courtesy and respect for their teacher and one another. Visitors to her class invariably remarked on the serious atmosphere to be found there, the neat rows of desks, the focus on basic skills, and the general order.

While Hernandez considered Mrs. Hubers to be an excellent teacher, she was aware others held different opinions. Generally speaking, families from the school's West Indian, Asian, and Haitian communities were strong supporters of Mrs. Hubers and her academic values. African-American parents, while sometimes concerned about what they considered to be Mrs. Hubers's indifference to the individual child's circumstances, were generally supportive of her high expectations and efforts. White parents from the Mission

Park area remarked, however, that while they found her knowledgeable and concerned about her students, her pedagogy was "inflexible and regimented." It was a pedagogy from their parents' generation; it was not "child-centered" and would not cultivate critical thinking skills. At last, some said, here was an opportunity for the principal to select a teacher who would be more modern and creative in her approach.

Hernandez had not chosen a side in this debate until central office began sending round candidates for her to interview. The first two candidates, women who were ethically and racially more reflective of the community's population, were academically weak, Hernandez believed. Two further candidates, white women who had been educated in elite universities and who had teaching experience in the suburbs, offered much stronger backgrounds.

Hernandez began by consulting informally with members from the various racial and ethnic groups. But, in the end, she realized it was her decision. When Hernandez finally settled on one of the white teachers, she feared a negative reaction from some quarters. Members of the Parents Council strongly endorsed her decision. For a while Hernandez waited apprehensively to hear from her critics. But because she heard nothing, Hernandez, relieved, soon turned her attention to other pressing matters.

Leadership

Our conceptualization of the role of educational administrator has evolved continuously over the last twenty years, from manager, to street level bureaucrat, change agent, instructional leader, and most recently, to that of transformational leader. At the same time, and undergirding this evolution, we have witnessed a growing discontent

within the field of educational administration itself. Policy, practice, training, and certainly theory and research have been closely inspected and each in turn has been found inadequate or, often times, misguided. In the ever-complex world of primary and secondary education, it would appear that our prevailing conceptualizations of school administration, ones that had their origins in the social sciences of the 1950s, are increasingly deemed insufficient both in terms of quality and utility.

Such critiques have had an impact on theory and practice. Administration practitioners, even as they have called for more support and training to meet growing expectations in the workplace and for licensure, struggle to comprehend the nature of their changing roles and to keep current with the expanding demands for greater and more complex skills. In turn, these same administrators have expressed strong reservations about the utility of the methods used in their training and development (Murphy, 1994; Bridges, 1990). Professional preparation and development programs have tended to focus primarily on the theories and concepts derived from the social sciences, that is, to teach prospective administrators *about* the field of educational administration. Graduates of these training programs report, however, that relatively little of the knowledge to which they have been exposed seems relevant to the problems and tasks they confront once on the job. The field's constituent groups largely agree that preparation methods must change.

One result of such practical concerns it that the validity of the knowledge base upon which educational administration has been based is under challenge. An expanding chorus of academic voices has rejected the social science paradigm that has guided the field's development since the 1950s (Murphy, 1993). Common to their various critiques

is recognition of certain *lacunae* in the field's core knowledge. As Cooper and Boyd (1987) have pointed out:

> The programmatic content of the One Best System Model now rests on an intellectual paradigm borrowed from social psychology, management, and the behavioral sciences. The philosophical base on the One Best Model, one that evolved alongside the programmatic component, is an abiding belief in empiricism, predictability, and "scientific" certainty, taught by professors steeped in this approach.

In place of the one best model, feminists scholars, critical theorists and cognitive theorists have offered new lenses for framing and understanding what has been, till relatively recently, largely unchallenged administrative paradigms, situated soundly within a structural-functionalist framework (Blount, 2001; Grogan, 1996; Woodrum, 1996).

Culture as a missing frame in leadership theory

That leadership is contingent upon the context in which it operates is a widely agreed upon belief. But the unspoken assumption in administrative theory and research is that the leadership is taking place in a Western cultural context. Research that takes exceptions to such assumptions has generally appeared in the management literature, not in that of educational leadership (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Hofstede, 1976). Even so, the number of studies examining the impact of societal culture on leadership is small; they are largely limited to training in cross-cultural contexts.

Since the 1960s administrative theorists have endeavored to develop a comprehensive conceptualization of educational leadership. Getzels et al. (1968) situated the administrator and the school in a cultural context; additionally, their study explored the impact that varying cultural values often exerted on the reasoning and behavior of school leaders and their constituents. But such attempts inspired little empirical research. Culture, if studied at all in organizations, has been limited to that of the organization itself, the "corporate culture," seldom that of the overarching society.

Bossert et al. (1982) identified both the school's community and its institutional context as important variables influencing the principal's leadership. This study

maintained that successful principals must adapt to their contexts as they endeavor to mold the internal processes of schools to their own ends. Their work identified both the community and the institutional context of schools as variables influencing the principal's leadership. Community, in this instance however, refers to the external environment: socio-economic status of parents, parental expectations etc. Institutional context refers to the policy context within which the school is nested: the work of the school board and all the rules and regulations within which the school functions. And while these variables are influenced by the society's culture, culture itself is absent from the framework.

Researchers in educational administration, when using culture as a frame for analysis, have almost always explored the culture of the organization as the context for leadership. This organizational culture is often known as school culture or climate. The school's culture is an amalgam of the values, norms, expectations and traditions of the individuals who function within the system. And while the school leader may be able to influence the culture of the institution, it is as likely that the school's culture will have as great an impact on the principal. The conceptual frame of organizational culture, as Getzels and others have theorized, reveals but a portion of the larger cultural variation of interest (Getzels, et al., 1968).

More recently scholars have called for the explicit examination of leadership from the frame of societal culture (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996; Heck, 1996; Woodrum, 1996). As Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) have commented:

> Normally we operate without an awareness of our own culture—it is "just the way we do things around here." Consequently, our theories typically make little or no reference to the cultural context in which leaders work. A cultural context exists, but our "acculturated lens" blinds us to its effect (p.106).

These researchers have hypothesized that, "societal culture exerts a significant influence on administrators beyond that of the specific organization's culture," (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996, p. 106) but the call in this work is for cross-cultural research, that is, examining the impact of cultural norms and values on leadership but as that leadership is exercised in schools in various national cultures.

In this paper, I explore the ways the norms and values of societal culture influence the exercise of leadership in a single school in an America community, but a community where the various constituent groups come from a variety of racial, ethnic, linguistic and national backgrounds.

Methodology

Role is a psychological concept dealing with behavior enactment arising from interaction with other individuals and groups. The various offices or positions in an organization carry with them certain expectations of behavior held by both onlookers and by persons occupying the role.

Biddle and Thomas (1966), in analyzing the intellectual and academic history of role theory, have culled from the work of theorists such as Merton (1968), Sarbin (1954), and Goffman (1974; 1986), a vocabulary of concepts that is widely established in the literature today.

- *Role Description*, referring to the actual behavior of an individual performing a role. In the Blane context, this might refer, for example, to a teacher's perception of the principal's role in resolving a classroom discipline issue.

- *Role Prescription*, referring to the idea of what the general norm in the culture is for the role. What kind of behavior is expected of Blane's principal in the individual's culture or ethnic group?

- *Role Expectation*, referring to the expectation that one person has of the role behavior of another. At Blane, as the teachers and principal interact in their roles in the school, they have complementary role expectations—if their expectations coincide. If the expectations do not, there arises *role conflict*.

- *Role ambiguity*, referring to the ambiguity that arises when the role prescription contains contradictory elements or is vague. Role ambiguity is rather commonly observed when there is an attempt to preserve the distinction between administration and supervision.

In studying the way the Mary Blane community understood the principal's leadership, both the understanding of community members and that of the principal herself, I collected data around Biddle and Thomas's taxonomy. This enabled me to analyze the ways individuals and groups perceived positional behavior and norms culturally different from their own. Each individual in the community, as he or she expresses the description, prescription, expectation and perception of the principal's role, frames, at the same time, his own cultural expectations for the principal. The complexity of interactive role descriptions and expectations served as a conceptual vocabulary for exploring the diverse, and often competing, expectations placed on Elena Hernandez.

I systematically set about visiting and interviewing the teachers in their classes. In total, I interviewed all the teachers and the principal four times, one hour each time. To demonstrate that my interests weren't merely opportunistic, on Thursdays and Fridays when I was in the building conducting interviews, I volunteered to teach Spanish, on a rotating basis, to groups the teachers chose. This enabled me to get to know students and to understand the academic and disciplinary concerns I had begun to hear about in my interviews. It also illuminated my understanding of issues raised at faculty meetings. As a result, my questions became more sophisticated and context specific. This reflexive relationship greatly enriched both my data-gathering strategies and the quality of the data I was able to gather.

Much the same strategy served to move my research beyond the school into the community. Because I taught their children, parents were more inclined to open their doors to me, or in cases where circumstances and culture precluded such intimate contact,

they agreed to meet me at school or in bars and restaurants. In total, I interviewed fifteen families on two different occasions for one hour each time, taking care to reach out to parents from different ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups. My intention in doing so was not so much to offer a representative sample of the community's demographics, although that issue was present, but more to gain an impression of the breadth of experiences and opinions to be encountered there.

In exploring the theme of culture from a group-based analysis, my intention is not to suggest that the various ethno-racial groups at Blane hold monolithic views nor to represent their views in ways that could be considered stereotypical. Indeed, I often found that as many variations existed within a group as similarities. My intention here is to surface general themes and explore them along the lines of the expectations expressed by the groups.

Ethno-Racial Interpretations of the Principal's Role

African-American and white teachers revealed a marked difference in the expectations they held for the governing style of a principal. While both groups described Hernández's governing style as "top down" and "emotional," white teachers were generally more willing to see it within the context of situational and structural impediments. Black teachers, on the other hand, often characterized Hernandez's style as hierarchical and unprofessional.

In reflecting on Hernández's leadership, for example, white teachers emphasized incidents in which the principal, through her "top down" governing style, had succeeded in imposing "order" on an often "chaotic school environment." If the principal was too hierarchical for their personal tastes -- and she often was -- at least the school ran more

smoothly, the white teachers maintained.

Even though white teachers often expressed "disappointment" at being excluded from participating in Hernandez's decisions, they, far more than black teachers, were willing to accept the principal's style as a necessary measure, given the state of the school and the city school system. "With all that's going on here on an average day," said one white teacher, "the principal doesn't have time to consult everyone." The situation, they were willing to believe, was sometimes "chaotic" and required a "strong hand." And if Hernández reacted emotionally in certain situations, then it was "only human. [The job] must be very frustrating." In other words, Hernández's "top-down" behavior, even if resented at times by white teachers, largely met the expectations that they held for a principal in the Blane School.

African-American teachers, on the other hand, frequently described the principal as "militaristic" and "arbitrary." When referring to issues of discipline, for example, the black faculty believed the principal's actions to be examples of "dealing superficially" with disciplinary issues without bothering to understand the underlying social causes. Only by addressing disciplinary issues across school, family, and community boundaries, they believed, would the individual student learn to reform his behavior.

Black teachers often recalled that the principal, when questioned about her actions, sometimes took the teachers' "professional criticisms" personally and reacted "emotionally." One African-American teacher said: "You just never know how she's going to react to what you say; some days she's all right, other days she might just pout." Hernandez's "top-down" governing style, as the black teachers saw it, conflicted with their expectation of working as equals with the leader. Furthermore, the principal's

"pouting" conflicted with what the black teachers considered "professional behavior." By reacting emotionally to work issues, the principal, they believed, was not taking their views seriously and thus was showing disrespect for them as professionals.

While white teachers judged Hernandez's effectiveness in terms of her personal example as a woman and an ethnic minority member, black teachers evaluated her in terms of her understanding of and involvement with the local community. To lead a school effectively, the black teachers all maintained, a principal needed to have respect for and be respected by the entire community. For black teachers, a principal needed to develop a personal relationship with the families and institutional leaders of the entire community. Only through personal involvement could the principal hope to earn the respect (and thus, moral authority) necessary for working successfully with children and families inside the school. That Hernández lived in the suburbs prevented her from understanding community issues, according to the black teachers, and as a result, it also prevented her from being perceived by students and families as a leader worthy of trust and authority. For black teachers, the fact that Hernandez made contact with leaders of community organizations and brought their programs into the school, while good, was not enough to demonstrate personal involvement. Dealing primarily with community leaders did not demonstrate personal commitment.

In evaluating the work of the principal, white teachers tended to emphasize her managerial skills, charisma, and gender. The effective leader, for them, rather than being personally involved in the external community, needed to involve parents in their child's learning inside the school. The principal needed to get parents into their children's classes and involve them in the life of the school. White teachers made a distinction between the

child's learning outside and inside the school, and saw the roles of the principal and the teacher as being focused more narrowly on the in-school experience. The effective principal, therefore, needed to concentrate on the education of students within the school.

White teachers saw in Hernández's ethnicity and gender, a role model for the community. That the principal lived in the suburbs, as the white teachers interpreted it, offered the hope to inner-city students that they, too, through hard work, might achieve this goal. White teachers judged her "inspirational example" as a "minority women" to be an important ingredient in her effectiveness.

With black teachers, however, Hernández's status as a "woman of color" was often discussed in terms of her actions rather than her race or ethnicity. Early in Hernandez's tenure, for example, black teachers frequently referred to the principal's ethnicity as an important plus in working with the members of the Blane community. "[That she is Latina] is important," said a veteran black teacher, "because she's a minority like other people in this community. That makes things easier for all of us." As the relationship between the principal and teachers grew more estranged, however, black teachers increasingly referred to her as a "white woman." When Hernández made the decision to replace a departing kindergarten teacher Mrs. Hubers with a white teacher, for example, one African-American teacher remarked, "She's saying who she is [by this choice]; I don't see no 'minority woman' there. She's trying to act white."

Cultural Values and Hernandez's Leadership

Elena Hernández, when she entered Blane School, assumed the leadership role in a deeply divided academic community. At the structural level, there existed an on-going struggle between the administrative and faculty cultures in the organization. At the same time, there existed within the staff itself a discontinuity among the values and expectations expressed by black and white teachers, particularly around issues of principal authority, understandings of community and the position of the school within that community, and the significance of race and ethnicity vis-à-vis leadership.

Dignity and respect are two concepts Hernández frequently invokes to talk about leadership. When she feels obliged to confront a lazy custodian, for example, she does not want to "take away his dignity" by pointing out his shortcomings "in front of other people. That's not [the Puerto Rican] way." In private, however, she can be, as was the case with the custodian, "very severe."

The concept of *respecto* (respect) is one of the core values in Puerto Rican culture (Fitzpatrick, 1971; Hidalgo, 1992; Lauria, 1972; Torruellas et al., 1991). *Respecto* is usually understood in two ways. The first type, a respect for self and others which all socialized Puerto Ricans must possess, is always expected in social interactions. It is a respect for another's human dignity. The second type is a respect for another's authority and stature, particularly for those occupying roles of superior status. Deference toward the authority role is expected, even if one feels reservations about the individual occupying the role.

The way children are socialized in the family clearly reflects this value of respect. Parents, to the child, are authorities who deserve respect; their decisions should not be

questioned. The Puerto Rican family "is one with close emotional ties and psychological ties in which the child becomes well-acquainted with the hierarchy of power and the role expectations of each family member" (Salgado, quoting Nieves-Falcón, 1985:40).

In a study exploring differences in cultural factors of Head Start children, for example, Ortiz Colón (1985) discovered that Puerto Rican mothers and Anglo teachers, while agreeing on the appropriate outcomes for a child's learning, disagreed on the means to achieve those same outcomes. Teachers valued independence and verbal assertiveness; mothers, on the other hand, valued adherence to rules and obedience. Anglo teachers frequently found the Puerto Rican child "too passive" because the child did not respond directly to the teacher or acted shyly in the teacher's presence. But passivity on the part of the child was in fact fulfilling cultural expectations.

When discussing her decisions as principal, Hernandez frequently relates them to the values of her culture. In explaining her critical evaluation of an African-American teacher, for example, Hernández explains:

> There is a constant disorder in her class. Students are talking quite loud with each other; they never do their own work. And worst of all, I find that she argues with them! If the student doesn't want to do something, then he argues with her. There is no discipline in their learning. She acts like a mother with them but they do not respect her.

In this case, Hernández is making clear connections between pedagogy and the way she believes students learn best, and her larger set of cultural expectations. Learning, she suggests, must take place in an orderly, "disciplined" classroom where the students show "respect" for the teacher by not questioning her authority. Hernandez makes a clear distinction between the behavior she expects in the classroom and in the home. The

teacher who does not work from these premises, is not a good teacher.

The African-American teacher in this instance, however, in reviewing her unsatisfactory evaluation, explained the dynamics of her classroom in quite different terms.

> I like to see students engaged in their learning. If they get excited and need to share that excitement with others then I don't mind. And they can tell me what they like and don't like; they can think for themselves. I don't mind them arguing their case. You're not going to have these kids acting one way outside school and then expect them to do just the opposite in school. That's just Ms. Hernández's power thing.

The disparity in these two views reveals much about the cultural discontinuities between the Puerto Rican principal's cultural norms and expectations around children, schools, and communities and the contrasting ones of the African-American teacher. Unlike Hernández, the African-American teacher grants the student space for a wide range of emotions and behaviors in class; assertive, even aggressive, feelings are permissible, provided that the feelings are, in the teacher's judgment, expressed in the pursuit of learning. In so doing, the African-American teacher attempts to minimize the discontinuity in behavioral expectations between her classroom and the community outside of school.

For the African-American teacher, classroom learning should be embedded in a wider education that takes place across a variety of settings including the home and the community. This view contrasts sharply with Hernández's belief that "the class [is] a place of escape from whatever problems [a student] might have [outside the school] because the focus [is] on learning." At the same time, the white teachers, while not ignoring the possibility that education may be a wider-based phenomenon than just

schooling, come closer to Hernández's view by maintaining that the proper focus of the teacher should be on the classroom experience.

Both black and white teachers, when reflecting on Hernández's conduct of faculty meetings, characterize her style as "stilted" and "formal," in contrast to their own relaxed style. One teacher explained: "there's just her and the faculty but she goes through this kind of formal thing where she stands up before all of us to speak. I have to say, she's been here three years and I still don't feel like I know her." Similarly, the principal, when she speaks about teachers' work, frequently comments on factors such as the teacher's way of dressing and speaking. To be effective, Hernández maintains, a "teacher must offer a model that children can respect; that means dressing nicely and speaking properly. It's important." While teachers, both black and white, express general support for this view, they do not place it at the center of "good teaching" as Hernández does.

Cultural Values and Authority

Hernández points to two fundamental childhood experiences in shaping her values as an educator: her unquestioned respect for the authority of her grandmother and the disciplined education she received from the Catholic Sisters. Although not male, Hernández's two most important educational influences have been profoundly hierarchical and therefore heavily imbued with issues of respect and authority. When teachers in faculty meetings insist that Hernández retrace her work with leaders outside the school in the formulation of plans, Hernández experiences their attitude as "resistance" and "lethargy." Ultimately, Hernández says, "it feels like they don't trust me to do this job. I have to learn to slow down.

Parents' Interpretations of Hernandez's Leadership

A growing body of sociological literature examines the experiences of minority children and their families as they first experience the institution of school. The historical value of interdependence and mutual aid in the African-American community, in which collaboration and group solidarity are emphasized, has been an area of increasing study (Gwaltney, 1981; Jewell, 1988; Stack, 1974). Other studies have documented the discontinuities between these values and those of the white, middle-class schools that the children of black families frequently attend (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1987; Heath, 1982; Kochman, 1981; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978).

While careful not to make monolithic claims about group experiences, other social scientists (Reese, Gallimore, Balzano, & Goldenberg, 1991; Suárez-Orozco, 1989; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995) have pointed out that, like Blacks and Asians, Latinos have also experienced dissonance between their culture-based values and those they experience in middle-class schools. LeVine and White (1986) have hypothesized that the traditional values of respect, family unity, good manners, and knowledge of right and wrong correspond to an "agrarian model" of values, as opposed to the mainstream "academic educational model," one characterized by social mobility, competition, and mass participation. Other scholars have pointed out that these two educational models reflect not merely differing ethnic or cultural values in schooling, but, frequently, the added dimension of socio-economic status (Metz, 1978; Oakes, 1985; Weis, Fine, & Lareau, 1992).

These competing models often lie at the heart of school-family conflicts for immigrant black, Latino, and Asian students today, just as they did a century earlier for

the children of Irish, and Southern and Eastern European immigrants in America's schools. While these studies do not specifically address the interactions of culture and leadership, they serve to inform an examination of culturally-based values that different groups bring to their interactions with schools, and thus, with school leaders.

Hernandez and the Parent Community

Elena Hernández's appointment to the principal's position went largely unnoticed by Blane parents in the beginning. If they noted it at all, their comments usually had more to do with the frequency with which the position turned over than curiosity about the new occupant of the office. Left unsaid was recognition that the job, and thus the school, was not sufficiently prestigious to attract or to keep administrators of quality. It was not a new story. Most would have joined with the Blane teacher who said, "people within the community here are somewhat discarded...there's no affirmation."

As parents came to know the new occupant of the principal's office, however, they were generally impressed by how "correct" Hernández was. That the principal paid attention to "proper" dress; that she expressed great courtesy and respect in greeting parents; that she focused on the children's comportment, all "raised hopes," as a Jamaican parent put it, "that we had a principal who understood us."

"Understood" among immigrant parents generally meant that they interpreted the principal's values about education as a concern with more than mere academic skills. For Haitian, Latino, and Asian parents, in particular, an educated child is one who demonstrates "good manners," cleanliness, and above all, respect for their parents and other adults. And an effective principal is one who cultivates a pedagogy that places these

values at the center of the school's philosophy.

For African-American and white parents of the Blane community, these qualities were also important, but these parents often interpreted the qualities in a larger context. Immigrant Caribbean and Asian parents, if good manners and respect were in evidence, tended to trust that appropriate reading and writing skills were also being taught. In their cultures, a parent is not normally expected to establish a personal relationship with the teacher or the school principal; indeed, attempts to get involved in the teacher's work could be considered a show of disrespect.

African-American parents desired, if not a personal relationship with the principal, that the principal establish a personal relationship with the community. It was important to this group of parents that the principal live in the neighborhood so as to understand the lives of their children and embody the link between the school and the community. Otherwise, the bond of trust between parent and leader could not be formed, and thus the principal's moral authority remained questionable.

For middle-class white parents, Hernández's attention to issues such as proper dress and manners was all very well, so long as it did not interfere with a proper concern for the individual student and his or her "learning style." Too much attention in these areas, however, can be seen as too "regimented" and "old fashioned." The proper role of the principal, according to these parents, is to ensure that the individual child, independent of other considerations, receive an education that will prepare him or her to succeed in life beyond the school. Their evaluation of Hernández tended to focus on the principal's understanding of the "hard realities" of the resource issue and her managerial skills.

Race and Resources

Not long after becoming principal, Hernández made the decision to begin actively recruiting the children of parents in the Mission Park neighborhood of New Metropolis. "I saw it like a contest," she recalls; "or they would close the school or I would get the enrollments up. If I lost, we lost the school." But it wasn't merely a question of enrollments; Hernandez calculated that white parents would bring with them the skills for grant writing that would bring desperately needed resources into Blane. Their participation on the Parents Council would infuse this long dormant body with new vitality. She did not understand, however, that this decision would be perceived quite differently by different constituencies throughout the greater community. "I come from a culture," Hernandez proudly declares, "where race doesn't mean like here. People don't even consider this an issue."

White parents were looking for a school where they could "have an impact." Among other things, they understood this to mean being able, and available, to work closely with Hernandez, and on an equal basis as professionals. They had always had this relationship with their children's schools. The increase in the number of white students at Blane represented to this group a practical decision; as one parent remarked, "it's not a question of race." At another level, however, Hernandez's adherence to this group's view also meant that, politically, they were having the "impact" they desired.

The increase in the number of white students was understood differently by the immigrant Asian and Caribbean parents. When asked her reaction to this policy, a Jamaican parent said, "Look. It is the reality; let's face it. The more white families you have, the more money you have. That means a better education for my kids. The principal

knows this." Asian parents, however, were reluctant to discuss the principal's policy in racial terms. "For Chinese," explained one Chinese father, "this not so big deal. Really, the issue more like good education. Kids, they need computer and these things." These parents tended to understand the economic necessity of bringing in more white families, even if they believed that the system was unjust. At the same time, it was important to these immigrant families that Hernández pay careful attention to issues of authority, respect, and structured learning in the school.

For African-American parents, however, this policy was interpreted as a betrayal of the principal's personal responsibility to the community. An African-American mother, a neighbor of the school, explains: "All of a sudden I was seeing all of these white parents over there, and I thought, Well this new principal's turning the school over to them." As in the past, the school leader has chosen to align herself with the powerful, thus making a politically expedient decision at the expense of the school's African-American children and families.

Conclusion

French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1933) noted at the end of the last century that the way we structure our social institutions is not a neutral enterprise; inherent in the design and function of institutions are the values and norms of the individuals and groups that produced them. In this same vein, Jerome Bruner (1996) tells us that

> Cultures are not simply collections of people sharing a common language and historical tradition. They are composed of institutions that specify more concretely what roles people play and what status and respect these are accorded -- though the culture at large expresses its way of life through institutions as well (p.29).

The structure of public schools, as we know them today, is largely the product of a patriarchical, middle-class white society (Cremin, 1961; Katz, 1968).

With changes in the national economy, the demographics of the citizenry, and our notions of cultural identity, the mission and role of schools in our society have changed dramatically. As the role and mission of schools have grown broader and more democratic, the once monolithic hierarchy of male authority at their helm, reflecting similar trends in the greater society, has also begun to change. Particularly in urban schools, we now see greater racial, ethnic, and gender diversity not only in the neighborhoods and classrooms, but also in the faculty lounges and principals' offices. Increasingly, our conceptions of leadership in these communities are moving away from ones of positional authority vested in one single individual, to ones of collective authority, vested in the values of the community and the mutual commitment of individuals to their children's education.

When Elena Hernández assumed the principalship of the Mary Blane School, she faced a number of daunting challenges. Largely ignorant of the school community and its history, Hernandez devised an entry plan that responded almost exclusively to the organizational and political challenges of saving the school from closing. The school required additional resources in order to survive, and so she turned to the two most immediate and available sources of support: business and neighboring, white, middle-class families. Within a couple of years, she had succeeded beyond anyone's reasonable expectations, and yet, as she herself acknowledges, she had alienated much of the school community in doing so.

Successful leadership at the Blane School meant different things to different

groups and constituencies. To Hernández's supervisors at the central office, leadership meant increasing student enrollments, attracting outside resources, and raising scores on achievement exams. By the end of her second year, the principal had accomplished much of this and thus, to central office, she was a successful leader. Other groups, however, understood and expected leadership to be manifested in different ways.

Hernández, in working to prevent the school from closing, responded to the challenge of diversity in this multicultural community as though it were principally a matter of getting the organizational roles right. She, as the school leader, exercised her positional authority to set an agenda that included the structuring of the teachers' and parents' participation in her plans. By forming relationships with a small number of white parents and businesses, she, as leader, was successful in attracting the resources necessary for improving the lives of teachers, students, and the community. And while she recognized that the teachers, for example, continued to have reservations about the way she exercised authority vis-à-vis their own roles and authority, she could not see a way of responding to their concerns, given the constraints on her time and the schedule imposed by circumstances. At this level of structural or role-related diversity, Hernandez was successful in galvanizing the organization toward her goals.

What Hernández failed to recognize, and therefore address, were the conflicting values and expectations in the community, both her own and those of the staff and parents. As we have seen, Hernández placed great emphasis on the value of respect, viewing it both as inherent dignity in the individual and as a show of deference for the leadership role. Many of her attitudes and decisions harken back to this hierarchical cultural value. Hernández's evaluation of teachers, her discipline decisions, her governing

style, her expectations of deference from teachers, all reflect this general value. It also becomes the focus of a great deal of miscommunication and unresolved conflict.

At the same time as she addressed the needs of the organization, the principal failed to understand that other groups in the greater school community held differing culturally-based expectations of leadership. Many African-American teachers and parents believed, for example, that the principal of the school also had to show personal commitment and connection to the community in order to exercise the necessary moral authority to lead. The model of leadership, particularly among the teachers, was expected to be collaborative and non-hierarchical. In governing from her own cultural values, Hernández came into direct conflict with these expectations.

The leader, who is herself a member of a marginalized group, cannot take for granted the values of other members of her community, even if they are fellow members of minority groups. Effective leadership requires her first to surface and examine the values, rituals, and traditions she embodies and introduces into her interactions with others. Hernandez failed to comprehend the complex dimensions of leadership in her school community; she astutely "reads" the organizational and political issues of her context and acts upon them with a considerable degree of success. But this proves successful on only one level.

Immigrant parents, in their interactions with the school and the principal, expected that the values of respect for adults, family, and authority be paramount, but manifested, at least in the classroom, as order, courtesy, and discipline. For this reason, Hernández enjoyed more support with immigrant parents than she did with other communities. It is only when Hernández made the politically expedient, and perhaps

necessary, decision to replace a black kindergarten teacher with a young white woman whose pedagogy conflicted strongly with the values of the immigrant families that many of these parents deserted Hernández.

White parents, who valued efficiency, assertiveness, and individuality in education and in their leader, found in Hernández, at least at the level of governance, an ally. Because these families were looking for a school partner with whom they could have "impact," they were willing to offer their knowledge, resources, and skills. There is clear evidence that while there is not so much a values match between this group and the principal, there is certainly an alliance around necessity. One suspects that, in the future, there will be difficulties around basic values. In the meantime, both sides need each other: the expectations of leadership in ethno-racially diverse organizations such as schools are also powerfully influenced by the inherent diversity of constituent groups.

Practitioners of educational administration, while struggling to comprehend the nature of their changing roles, too often find that much of what they study in their training and development programs fails to address the tasks and issues they confront once in the field. The model in which most administration students are trained, an intellectual paradigm that grew out of a belief in empiricism, predictability and "scientific" certainty, fails to address the complexity that many interns encounter in schools and communities. If, as feminists scholars and critical theorists have pointed out, the One Best Model fails to frame effectively the complexity of real-world issues then the cultural frame offers a promising lens for understanding those schools, communities and districts where competing sets of cultural values pose challenges to leadership that are largely missing from the core knowledge base of educational administration.

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